



## MEMORANDUM

**TO:** Superintendents and Principals  
**FROM:** Cathy Danyluk, State Attendance Officer  
**DATE:** September 9, 2009  
**SUBJECT:** Attendance Guidelines

In response to several questions the Indiana Department of Education has recently been asked, the Department has developed the following guidelines related to attendance.

### **Rationale**

School districts currently define “excused” and “unexcused” absences. Discrepancies currently exist in the way excused and unexcused absences are defined and reported. In some cases, school districts have adopted policies which define excused and unexcused absences (and attendance in general) in a way that may artificially inflate a school’s attendance rate. In other cases, school districts have defined absences in a way that may artificially deflate their schools’ attendance rates, thereby negatively affecting AYP ratings.

Although the Department does not dictate how school corporations define excused and unexcused absences, the following guidelines are provided in the form of recommendations to school districts.

### **Recommendations**

#### **Tuancy**

The Department recommends truancy be defined as “a student’s absence from school without the permission of a parent/guardian.” Further, I.C. § 20-33-2-11(b)(1) requires a school district’s discipline rules to include “a definition of a child who is designated as a habitual truant, which must, at a minimum, define the term as a student who is chronically absent, by having unexcused absences from school for more than ten (10) days of school in one (1) school year.” This is the extent of Indiana statute on this definition. A district should determine how to handle truancy from a particular class or how truancy is affected by block scheduling.

**Excused Absences**

Excused absences should be defined as absences the school district regards as legitimate reasons for being out of school, as included in the school policy. These could include the following:

- Illness verified by a note from a parent/guardian
- Illness verified by a note from a physician
- Attendance at a family funeral
- Absences related to maternity

**Unexcused Absences**

An unexcused absence should be defined as any absence not covered under the school district's definition of excused or exempt absence.

**Exempt**

Pursuant to I.C. § 20-33-2-14 through 17.2, a student is excused from attending school under some circumstances. Those circumstances include serving as a page or honoree of the Indiana General Assembly, participating in an election, testifying in court under subpoena, serving with the National Guard for no more than ten days, or serving with the civil air patrol for no more than five days. In each of these circumstances, the student is excused from school, is not to be recorded as absent, and may not be penalized in any way by the school.

The governing body of a school corporation may authorize the absence and excuse of a student who attends any educationally related non-classroom activity if the activity meets the conditions set out in I.C. § 20-33-2-17.5.